

Jack Ruby's Judge, Joe Brown, Dies

DALLAS, Tex. (AP) — Judge Joe B. Brown, the state district judge who meted out the death sentence for Jack Ruby only to see his verdict overturned, died yesterday of a heart attack at the age of 60.

Brown, a big, affable man who insisted on courtesy but allowed a relaxed atmosphere in his court, had several heart attacks before and after the Ruby trial.

Funeral arrangements were to be announced today. He leaves his widow and a son.

RUBY shot to death Lee Harvey Oswald, accused assassin of President John F. Kennedy, as Oswald was being transferred from the Dallas City Jail to a cell in the county jail.

The soft-spoken Brown told friends of "drinking a Dr. Pepper with old Jack" during recesses of the Ruby trial. "You know," he said, "I kinda liked talking to him."

He was known to have stopped court proceedings to go into his chambers to chat a moment with a friend and on at least one occasion saw a friend waiting for him and called him back to the bench as a burglary trial continued.

He refused a change of venue for Ruby, one of the items on



Joe B. Brown

which the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals later reversed the original decision and sent it back to Wichita Falls for retrial.

Later, after Ruby died of cancer in 1967 in the Dallas County Jail, Brown told friends he "doubted that Jack Ruby could get a fair trial anywhere." Ruby died while his new trial was pending.

Publicly, he would never comment, but he said of the Ruby trial held in Dallas: "I think his trial here was as fair as any man could have gotten under the circumstances."

He reached national attention in the Ruby trial and in the narcotics trial of blonde strip-tease queen Candy Barr.

Brown received wide publicity for stepping down from the bench during a recess, and — after asking her permission — snapping a candid photograph of the blonde stripper. Brown himself thought little of the incident, saying only that "she was a pretty girl."

Miss Barr returned to the Dallas show circuit for the first

Marion Brown came to the first time since the 1959 trial only last weekend. Brown's court found her guilty and ordered a 15-year prison sentence.

Before he decided to go to law school in 1931, Brown had several jobs, one as an office boy with the Texas & Pacific Railroad.

"ONE evening after work in 1931," he said, "I was standing around near the T&P building when a friend came by and said he was going to law school. I said that was a pretty good thing and went with him."

He graduated from Jefferson Law School in Tennessee in 1934 and after a family conference decided not to practice law. Instead, he ran for justice of the peace and won easily, as he subsequently ran and won successively higher benches until he became a district judge in 1957.

As a criminal district judge, he tried more than 34,000 cases.

He permitted attorneys for both sides considerable leeway in the Ruby trial. He was not a gavel-pounder, but he could get stern when he believed it necessary.